The "rules of genealogical research": Responding to Tanner's "Genealogy Star" blog



An image from a post on familytree.com titled "Long Lost Relatives from Across the Aisle"

In late December James L. Tanner wrote, on his "Genealogy Star" blogspot, about genealogical research in the age of the internet. He wrote that "fundamental rules of genealogical research" necessitate that every conclusion cites a record or document. He added that "genealogy is not something you just make up in your spare time. The whole idea is that genealogy is based on history." I write this post not to disagree with him, but to the contrary, to agree with him with a doubt.

In the rest of Tanner's post, he notes how the "popular part of genealogy has evolved into a copycat deluge" with content of "record hints" ignored or dismissed, adding that there is "no way to purge the system of the old inaccurate information" meaning that such inaccuracies are "copied as well as the accurate information." He gives examples of the ""Family Data Collection – Deaths" collection (which was "copied from copies"), the "Family Data Collection – Births" collection (similar to the other family data collection), and the "U.S. Social Security Applications and Claims Inde[x]s, 1936-2007" (which could be "accurate, but unless the person looking at the entry goes beyond this entry, there is no way to know if the information is useful") on Ancestry.com. He ends his post by saying the following to the reader:

These are examples of the need to look carefully at the sources and to avoid copying copies. Without a general community-wide awareness of this need, we will keep getting copies of copies and preserving inaccurate information. Part of the blame for this situation lies with the individuals, but more lies with the large online companies who think they have "protected themselves" from criticism by explaining the traps but still promote the traps at the same time.

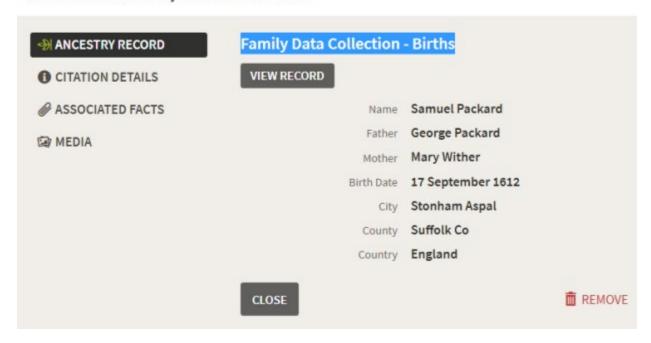
Before moving on, I'd like to respond to the above recommendations and comments. I agree that it is easy to preserve inaccurate information. However, I think it is horrible that companies like <u>Ancestry</u> and sites like <u>Family Search</u> promote bad records with inaccurate sources. So, you have to be careful with genealogical research without a doubt.

Now, let me add my two cents and personal experience.

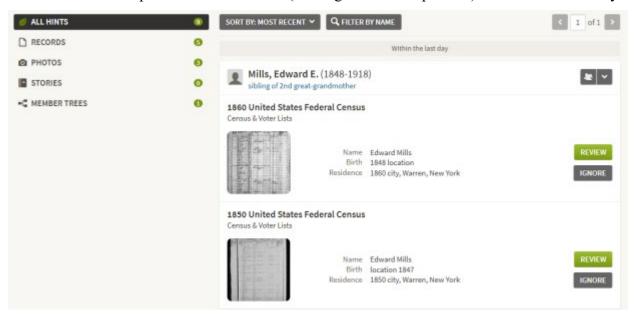
When I originally started doing genealogy, I was adding sources left and right, copying directly from family trees. These trees made it seem that the family on my mom's side descended from English royalty. I used similar information to "prove" the link from my mom's ancestors to a family of a similar name in England. However, this was all for naught: I only relied on family trees but little else. This meant I had to delete many individuals, deleting the "stinky" parts of my family tree on Ancestry.

Since then, my family tree on Ancestry has become a work in progress. I add and subtract information as needed, from time to time. I use "family trees" as a source but only when other sources are available. I recommend that one avoid other horrible sources like the "American Genealogical-Biographical Index (AGBI)", "Millennium File", "U.S. and International Marriage Records, 1560-1900" and "Web: Netherlands, GenealogieOnline Trees Index, 1000-2015" if possible. One of the collections looks like this:

Source Citation for Family Data Collection - Births



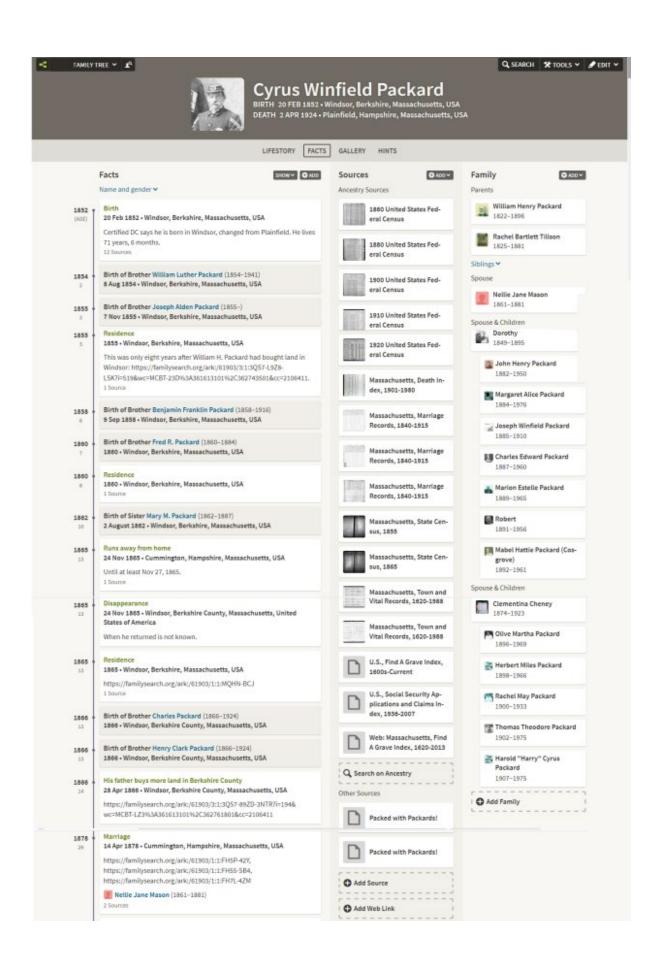
And here is an example of what the "hints" (or the green leaf on profiles) look like on Ancestry:



In this case, both hints are about the right person. However, I clicked "ignore" on both because the profile of his father already listed both censuses. I Just wrote "see 1850 census linked on his father's page" (and the same for 1860), adding in the information from his father's page. I did this because I don't currently have an Ancestry.com subscription, but I have information attached to pages from the time I did have a subscription.

Anyway, more to the point of Tanner's post is a biography on Cyrus Winfield Packard. I originally was going to do the entry on Samuel Packard, which is one of the earliest entries on my family tree but I mostly cite my Packed With Packards! blog (which cites original sources), so it probably isn't a good example of good sourcing. So, I present the following biography (with certain identifying of the family tree information blacked out) as an example of something for other researchers to emulate.

Here is the top half of the page:



Census records and marriage records are the mainstay of this biography, whether federal or state censuses (only some states like Massachusetts have them). There is also a peppering of vital records of Massachusetts, Find A Grave, and posts from my *Packed with Packards!* blog about Cyrus. Now, census records and vital records can be found on ancestry, but if you don't want to pay for a subscription like yours truly then you can look up the same records on familysearch.org. You need to create an account now, but it is still relatively easy and a free-to-use service. This is an advantage of Family Search over Ancestry without a doubt.

Then there is the second half of the biography:

1880 + 25	Residence 1880-2-subhanystem, Hampathin, Massachusetts, USA 1880-2-subhanystem, Hampathin, Massachusetts, USA 1880-2-subhanystem, Since te is a farm hand, makes sense be lon't 1880-2 in this directory, https://sinib/poarch.org/arks/61903 1,000-257-900X-419554-4900X-2194 1,000-11	
1881 -	Death of Mother Rachel Barriett Tilson (1825-1881) 30 January 1881 - Flainfield, Massachusetts, USA	
1881 -	Death of Wife Heile Jane Mason (1861-1861) 13 Feb 1861 - Cummington, Hampobire, Massachusetts, USA	
1881 +	Parkhases 112 acres from William L. Packard 24 Rog 1811 - Plankfell, Mempather County, Massachusetts, United States of America Calls himself "Minfaid Thackard" in this document. Cora not mentioned, this is because he has NO!" married her yet. 3 Heds	
1881 + 25	Marriage 21 Nov 2855 - Gion Falls, Marron, New York, USA B. Doodety' (1849-1815) 1 Hode	
1882	Birth of San John Henry Packard (1882-1950) 15 Oct 1882 - Plainfield, Hampshire County, Massachusetts, USA	
31	Sirth of Daughter Margaret Alice Packard (1894–1976) 27 Jan 1884 - Plainfield, Hampahire, Massachusetts, USA	
1884	Death of Brother Fred B. Packard (1800-1884) 12 Aug 1884 - Plainfield, Massachusetts, USA	
1885 + 33 1887 +	Birth of Son Joseph Winfleid Packard (1885-1910) 17 Jan 1885 - Plainfield, Hompahire, Massachusetts, United States Birth of Son Charles Edward Packard (1807-1900) 8 May 1887 - Cummington, Massachusetts	
1887	Death of Sister Mary M. Packard (1862–1867) 12 July 1887	
1888 -	Death of Brother Welcome Tillson Packard (1803–1888) 11 Jan 1885 - Renton Falls, Canada	
1889 -	Birth of Daughter Marion Estelle Packard (1889–1965) 13 Feb 1889 - Plainfield, Hampshire, Massachusetts, USA	
1890 -	Incl. 122 acres 15 pp. 1810 - Fundedind, Hampathire Co., Messachis settle Profession cannot be Cade Proteined, Lead beingth by Henry Profession cannot be Cade Proteined. Lead beingth by Henry Geodelich, Coan acresion as his West, Sean lead in terrological in 1000. https://linkinghouse.com/sci.org/sci.12003/05.121/0509-0622- 06377-9606-06-06-06-0259-05-016-0307-9607-061-07-05-06-07-06-06-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-06-07-07-06-07-07-06-07-07-07-07-07-07-07-07-07-07-07-07-07-	
1890 ·	Bays other land 1890 - Springfield, Hampden, Massachusetts, USA 1 Meda	
1891	Birth of San Rabert (1892-1994) 1891 - Plainffeld, Hampshire Co., Massachusetts	
1892 -	Sells land in Flainfeld to Amos Deoning May 2802 - Plainfeld, Flamphire Cuerty, Massachusetts, United Steese of America Amos, of Bushables, pan Cynn 5300 for this land previously owed by Televicy C. Rodukard (Cynu's brottler). Dora noted as Cynu's with, agrees to sale. 2 incl. 2	
1892 4	Birth of Daughter Nabel Hattle Packard (Cosgreve) (1892-1961) 18 Jal 1892 - Plainfield, Hampshire, Massachusetts, USA	
1895 -	Death of Wife Darothy (164) - 1895 1895 - Plainfield, Hampablin Co., Massachusetts	
40	Marriage 4 Aug 1899 - Gosben, Hampshire, Massachusetts, USA https://hamilysearch.org.lairs/85893/1.15PH72-92.1 Clementina Cheney (1814-1923) 5-Sources	
1898 -	Death of Father William Henry Packard (1822-1805) 21 August 1806 - Plainfield, Hampshire, Massachwetts, USA	
1896 -	Birth of Daughter Olive Hantha Packard (1896-1995) 24 Oct 1898 - Plainfeld, Hampshire, Nassachusetts, USA	
1898 -	Birth of Son Herbert Mies Packard (1993–1995) 6 Oct 1898 - Plainfield, Hampshire, Hassachusetts, USA	
1900 +	Birth of Daughter Rachel May Packard (1900-1903) 13 Apr 1900 - Plainfield, Hampshire, Massachusetts, USA	
1900 +	A. N. Allen & Co. buys a parcel of land in Plainfield 25 Nov 1900 - Plainfield, Hampahire Causty, Massachusetts, United States of America From Cytus, Lists Clementino as his selfe. Gains 5000 dellars. 2 Media	
1900 -	Residence 1900 - Piainfeld, Hampshire, Massachusetts, USA Markal Stunz: Married; Relation to Head of Hosse: Head. Described as a carpenter. 2 tourss	
1902 -	Birth of Son Thomas Theodore Packard (1902-1975) 2 May 1902 - Plainfield, Hempshire, Massachusetts, United States	
1935	Selis Lond he gained in 1905 3 Jan 1965 - Palarfield, frampshire County, Massachusetts, United States of America Clementina noted as his wife. 2 Media	
1907 -	Birth of See Harold "Harry" Cyrus Packard (1907-1915) 24 Aug 1907 - Plainfield, Hampshire, Hassachusetts, United States	
1909 +	Paid 5000 by the Haydensville Savings Bask for 175 acres 1. Jun 1904 - Curreningter, Hampshire County, Massachusetts, United States of America Clemertine noted as his wife. 2 Meda	
1910 -	Death of Sen Joseph Winfield Packard (1865-1950) 9 Mar 1910 - Sloux City, Nebraska, United States	
1910 -	Residence 1300 - Hainfield, Hampahire, Massachusetts, USA Marital Stutus Married, Relation to Head of House: Head, Described as a general former. 2 Sources	
1916 -	Death of Brother Benjamin Franklin Packand (1858-1916) 1916	
1920 -	Gets a mentgage on fairst land in Plainfield 31 Jan 1900 - Plainfield, Hampshire County, Massachusetts, United States of America This land will later be released from his mortgage flar which he has to pay 9% a year) in 1546, 24 years after this death. Ji Holda	
1920 -	Residence 1920 - Plainfield, Hampshire, Massachusetts, USA Marital Status; Married, Relation to Head of House: Head 1 Source	
1920 -	Residence 1920 - Plainfield, Hampshire, Massachusetts, USA Nazir Plainfield, Hampshire, Massachusetts, USA Sazir Plainfield, Hambert Bernet, Described as a general farmer. 2 Sources	
1922 •	Lete company put up powerfines on his land 3 Aug 3022 - Plasifields, Hampairire Caverty, Massachssetts, Uned States of America This is the same land he was paying a montgage for the a year, which he had acquired two years exities. I take	
1925 -	Death of Wife Clamentina Chency (1874–1923) 27 Jan 1923 - Plainfield, Hompshire, Massachusetts, USA	
1924 -	Death of Brother Charles Pockard (1866–1924) 1924 - Massachusetts, USA	
1924 -	Death of Brother Henry Clark Packand (1866-1904) 1904 - Massachusetts, USA	
1924 -	Death 2 Apr 1924 - Plainfield, Kompohine, Massachusetts, USA Died of Chronic Myrcopolitis and General Anassous, Ceren from certified oppy of recosts. Carb him as farmer, increedly says he is windowed. Daughter Olive is informant. Lived on Governor St. in Plainfield. 3 Novince.	
1925 +	His farm bought by his son, Theodore 1925 - Plainfield, Hampshire Co., Massachusetts	
1946 4	Discharge of land he owned Ja Oct 1860 - Planfinis, Humpahire County, Massachusetts, United States of America 1 Hoda	
	Burial Plainfield, Hampohire County, Massachusetts, USA 2 Source Add Pact	

It continues in the same vein as the top half. I tried my best to source every bit of information I found. You may notice that I used photographs as a source. These come from a collection of Massachusetts Land Records at http://www.masslandrecords.com which you can search free and online. I was able to find a good many land records that way, which was immensely helpful to telling the story of Cyrus Winfield Packard. This blog is one of the first posts connecting my *Packed With Packards!* blog with this one.

I look forward to hearing your comments.

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